

## Welcome Note

Albert Einstein said, "The creative mind is a sacred gift, and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift".

The time has come for a huge shift in how every business is going to function post the coronavirus pandemic. We will as a team need to bring out the creative thinker in each of us to face a new work era.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) has almost brought the world to a standstill and it's no different for us at The VITSKamats Group. We are not going to call this time challenging but unique. We are proud of how various local teams at The VITSKamats Group are handling this unique situation. Great work is being done at our Satara, Pandharpur, Silvassa, and other units.

At this moment, we want to assure every employee, this is a passing phase and a 'new normal' will prevail. We are staying close-knit even at a distance and will be ready with renewed hope and aspirations to face a better tomorrow.

With the decline of air travel, at least for the next 1-2 years, it is only going to increase car travel. And holiday destinations, between 2- 6 hours of major cities are going to do extremely well. Naturally, hygiene is going to be a key focus for the next 12 months. But that's something we as a group were already committed and famous for. All we need to do is fine tune and add some new processes to the old.

A time to adapt and evolve to the new requirements of the times.

This newsletter is our commitment – Together a New Tomorrow...



## Welcome on Board

We are pleased to welcome Nanette D'Sa to the Board of Directors, Vidli Restaurants Limited.

We anticipate her expertise at MNC brands like Disney, Mattel, and Star TV and her marketing skills at Sanjeev Kapoor's restaurant chain, will be an asset to our Board. Her accumulated insights as Hon. Director of the Franchising Association of India (2014-2017) would further benefit the company in adding value to our franchise models.

We look forward to your new leadership role and welcome you On Board!

## Stars of Satara

When the stars come out...

The first three to four days of the COVID-19 lockdown came upon the people of India as a complete surprise. Many in the city of Satara, were equally unprepared to handle it. At such a time the police had to be everywhere to ensure that the public understood the stay-at-home concept and followed it with due diligence. At Vithals Kamat Satara, Mr. Parvez Shaikh with his team of 8 staff who got left behind in the restaurant due to the lockdown, immediately took upon themselves to offer help to the police force on duty and to any

other person stranded in Satara. From 25th to 28th March, they distributed over 200 food packets of breakfast and dinner each day. The 8 so-called 'Stars of Satara' split into two teams – to handle the East and West of the city. They went around on their two-wheelers visiting police checkpoints, mandirs, masjids, churches and bus stands to distribute the food packets, water, and sanitizers. From Poha for breakfast to Veg Pulav for dinner, Kamats stood up as always to be the first one to offer help. Kudos Parvez and team, your shining stars make us proud!



## The VITS Upper Thane - Staff in lockdown

The hotel 'VITS Upper Thane' located in Kalyan, Mumbai is a 28 room property managed by 60 employees of The VITS Kamats Group. The operations have come to a total standstill as the area has been earmarked as a hot spot with incidence of the coronavirus (COVID-19). Within a day that followed the total shutdown, 50% of the staff who lived nearby managed to find their way home while the remaining 50% found themselves stranded. VITS immediately relocated these people to the staff accommodation nearby. Today the General Manager of VITS Upper Thane, Mr. Mangal Singh is in constant touch with the employees to ensure that they are

provided with all basic amenities. A system has been set in place, wherein a requisition is sent on a weekly basis to a purchase manager, who coordinates with a vendor to provide all necessities so that the 30 employees are able to 'stay-at-home' and 'stay safe'.

While the 2 managers along with 6 female employees and 22 other male employees wait patiently for the lockdown to be lifted, they are grateful for VITS for taking such good care of them.

At VITS the belief prevails, "To win in the marketplace you must first win in the workplace."



## The Holistic Approach of the Marketing Department

The Marketing Department has been on its toes since the lockdown. Thanks to its continued digital efforts, there's never a dull moment on the social media pages of The VITS Kamats Group.

**All our staff including the chefs wear gloves & masks while preparing food and wash their hands every 30 minutes**

Let's maintain Social

## Distance!

**High contact surfaces sanitized every 30 minutes**

**Rooms and counters sanitization done at regular intervals**

**We Salute**

All the frontline workers for their relentless support in securing the nation against the ongoing pandemic of COVID-19.

#TheVITSKamatsGroup

## Champions of Pandharpur

Today in the pilgrimage town of Pandharpur, in Solapur district of Maharashtra, we are fighting a war against the corona virus. A war without guns and bullets but more deadly than any army. This time the frontline warriors are the police, doctors and nurses, Anganwadi sevaks, Nagar Palika staff, sanitation department workers, Talati office staff, and numerous others who are working round-the-clock to keep people of Pandharpur safe. At such a time Mr. Abhijit Patil of Kamats, Pandharpur has risen to the occasion to help these frontline warriors. The 5 employees working at Vithal Kamats, or should we call them 'Champions of Pandharpur' have been cooking and readying packed breakfasts, lunches and dinners for around 500-600 warriors daily since the 24th of March. These takeaway meals are available at the restaurant every day between 9.30 to 8pm. The wholesome breakfast has poha / idli / sheera served, while the lunches/dinners comprise of 2 chapattis, 1 bhaji and a rice dish. Mr. Abhijit Patil and his team at Vithal Kamats have once again stretched out a helping hand. We are truly proud of these 'Champions of Pandharpur'.



## Leading in the lockdown – VITS Silvassa

Silvassa, the capital of the union territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli wedged between Maharashtra and Gujarat houses VITS Silvassa, a well-established 74-room hotel. Silvassa is surrounded by manufacturing industries who have set up plants in the Union Territory owing to tax stops for industries.

### The Lone Guest at VITS Silvassa

At Silvassa, we are coming to terms with the sudden outbreak of COVID-19 and like true hoteliers without concern for the consequences of the economic slowdown, we continue to 'serve our customers'. The impact of the novel coronavirus was so severe that we were left with only one guest in the hotel – Mr. Bhaskar Trivedi, Project Consultant, Rosario BioTech Limited. He did attempt to check-out but both his attempts to head home to Kutch on March 27 and subsequently on April 5, failed. So since March 18, Mr. Bhaskar Trivedi is our only long-staying guest. Mr. Bhaskar Trivedi, we are proud to serve you and keep you safe.

(At the end of the article, you can INCLUDE APPRECIATION LETTER BY MR. TRIVEDI)



### Never shying away from Social Responsibility

VITS has never taken a step back when it comes to social responsibility. On April 15, things took a turn. We were coping with cancellations with inbound tourism having come to a grinding halt under the lockdown and taking care of our only guest in Room 20, Mr. Bhaskar Trivedi, when we were approached by the local government. From April 16, our hotel was chosen to house

58 persons from Sun Pharma, Dadra. Since the pharmaceutical manufacturer needed to carry on its operations with minimum staff closer to the factory premises, we took the initiative to accommodate them at our hotel. The government doctors were at the hotel on the morning of April 16 to check every Sun Pharma employee and ensure they were fit for check-in. Since then the hotel has been serving two meals – breakfast and dinner to the employees of Sun Pharma.

Serving 58 employees' food is not our only concern. The larger responsibility is to follow the highest standards of hygiene and safety to protect them. In accordance with government directives, we are following some stringent measures:

- Meals are provided in our larger banquet hall with tables suitably arranged maintaining social distancing.
- The timings are staggered with half-hour intervals to accommodate floor-wise only 20 persons at a time.
- Every room is disinfected every day

Thanks to our local vendor who brings us a weekly stock of vegetables, rice, flour, salt, spices, and supplies, we have been able to serve all our occupants healthy and complete meals. What more can one ask for in times of a lockdown, when you get a clean bed and a freshly cooked meal with a vegetable, dal, hot rotis, papad and pickle after a long day at work?

### The Staff

We have only been able to serve Mr. Bhaskar Trivedi and the 58 persons from Sun Pharma because of our 8 hardworking staff that continue to reside on the premises and serve with a smile taking utmost care of every guest. The Silvassa property engages around 60 staff that are provided accommodation close to the hotel premises but due to government directive of functioning with skeletal staff during a lockdown, the remaining staff has been requested to remain at the company premises. The VITSKamats Group ensures food supplies from the hotel are replenished for these staff members on a weekly basis so that they can remain safe in-

doors. *The General Manager of VITS Silvassa, Mr. Arun Jaisinghani addresses the remainder of staff, who are in the staff quarters few kilometres away and cannot come to work till end of lockdown, on a weekly basis via video calling apps, assuring them of their jobs while ensuring food, books, water, and every essential item is provided to them.*

### The Stop Gap Plan

VITS Silvassa, while it continues to function in this lockdown, is also focusing to utilize the period to fix and deep clean whatever is possible. They have their hands full at the moment but will be ready for business once the business resumes. Safety and Hygiene compliance will continue to be prioritized at the property. After the COVID-19, work and life will continue.

Till then, *"Hospitality is simply an opportunity to show love and care"*



## Updated Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's) post lockdown

We understand the gravity of the lockdown and are following every government guideline in fighting the coronavirus (COVID-19).

Till then, here are few of the stringent SOPs that we have put in place to strictly follow at the VITS Kamats Silvassa Hotel for 60 days subsequent to the lifting of the lockdown or till further notification from the Government of India:

- Every employee to be sent for a medical examination before re-summing work.
- All staff to be given masks, gloves, headgear.
- Masks have to be worn by staff while interacting with guests, maintaining a distance of 2 meters with team and guests.
- Continue to use thermal gun scanners during check-in at security, reception and restaurant entrance.
- 20 seconds hold breath tests for employees and guests. If they cough, the staff/guest will be sent for further examination
- Hotels to insist on mobile numbers, emergency contact numbers, permanent address of guests during check-in (this is a government directive required for authorities to trace the person in case of any renewed cases of COVID-19). The staff is already documented by HR.
- Double occupancy will be discouraged.
- Multiple hand sanitizer dispensers will be available for guests and staff on the premises.

- Housekeeping staff will continue deep cleaning and disinfecting rooms.
- Dettol liquid soap in every washroom.
- Cloth table mats and cloth napkins to be replaced with disposable paper mats and napkins. Also paper plates and paper glasses to be used.
- Dropping the use of finger bowls. Guests will be requested to instead use the washbasin for better hygiene.
- Room service will bring the food only up to the entrance of the room.
- Swimming pool to remain drained out.
- Outdoor areas and gardens will not be open to any gatherings.
- The Risk management team - General Manager, Front Office Manager, and Head of Housekeeping Department, to attend to a guest in case of an emergency.
- Two staff members with better knowledge of the health directives (may have a family member working in healthcare) will be appointed as health officers to guide others and ensure precautions are in place against the coronavirus (COVID-19) are being correctly followed.

All this and more at The VITSKamats Group, as we don't just serve food but good health on a platter!

## Sashi Tharoor advocating healthy eating in times of Coronavirus



An author, politician, former international civil servant, and the most articulate speaker, Sashi Tharoor's Tweets and speeches are known to make Indians reach out for the dictionary to relearn English with words like 'Farrago'(confused mixture), Muliebrity (womanly qualities; womanliness) and Floccinaucinihilipilification (the action or

habit of estimating something as worthless). Today my Scripturient (having a strong urge to write) self, stops to question if this rodomontade (boastful or inflated talk or behaviour) makes Shashi Tharoor a literate Guru or just a man hiding a true soul behind obnoxious words. Not really though...I'd say he's simply gifted!

So, when Sashi Tharoor the Congress MP took to his twitter handle to post a picture of idli with multiple types of chutneys to go with it and wrote, "As far as I'm concerned every day is Idli Day but today, March 30, is officially #WorldIdliDay" we expected a deluge of words and not 9 chutneys that surrounded 3 idlis.

All said and done, the one thing that emerged was the humble South Indian 'IDLI – steamed savory rice cake' stood out as a 'Healthy Food' choice in the times of the coronavirus (COVID-19).

## FOOD TO FIGHT

Had you in a million years thought food would become the ultimate shield to protect you against your worst enemy? So, it appears today. With the Coronavirus (COVID-19) the only thing experts tell you is - eat well and build your immunity to fight the deadly virus.

### The Background

Coronaviruses are a group of related viruses that cause diseases in mammals and birds. The story goes - someone in the Huanan province of Wuhan was infected by a virus from eating pangolin meat and the rest is history. The first cluster developed in China's Hubei province and then spread globally infecting 185 countries. But scientists are still trying to unravel the truth behind the story to understand which animal species passed it to humans. The other story goes it is a man-made biological weapon. Many of us will never know the truth behind the outbreak.

### The Disease and the Symptoms

COVID-19 is a disease caused by the new coronavirus. Its symptoms include cough, fever, shortness of breath, muscle aches, sore throat, unexplained loss of taste and smell, diarrhea, and headache. As of now scientists only know it has an incubation period of 14 days and can spread through droplets released into the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Most people infected with COVID-19 will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and can be treated. Older people and people who are already medically compromised (with conditions of asthma, diabetes, and heart disease) are more likely to develop serious illness leading to death. On January 30, 2020,



the outbreak was declared a 'Public Health Emergency of International Concern' by the World Health Organization. As of April 21, 2020, while 171,249 deaths have been attributed to COVID-19 pandemic, 658,009 people recovered from the illness.

How do you protect yourself from this coronavirus? There is no vaccine as yet to protect mankind from this coronavirus. Until then it is crucial to

1. Practice good hygiene.
2. Stay at home as much as possible.
3. Maintain social distancing by keeping a distance of 6 feet.
4. Cover your face with a cloth mask since the disease is transmitted through the mouth and the nose.

5. Improve your immunity.

### Food to build immunity

Boosting your Immune System against Coronavirus is needed to minimize the risk of infection. Here are 5 healthy eating tips provided by UNICEF: -

1. Keep up the fruit and vegetable intake: Finding fresh fruits and vegetables can be challenging in a lockdown, but whenever possible, do include a portion of fruit with freshly cooked vegetables.
2. Swap in healthy dried or canned alternatives when fresh produce is not available: Include grains and lentils like split peas, chickpeas, rice, couscous, or quinoa which are nutritious and filling. Canned oily fish such as sardines, mackerel and salmon are rich in protein, omega 3 fatty acids, and a range of vitamins and minerals. Use the tinned fish in a sandwich or salad or cook it as part of a warm meal.
3. Build up a stock of healthy snacks: Avoid salty snacks, opt for healthier options like nuts, dry fruits, cheese, yogurt (unsweetened), and boiled eggs.
4. Limit highly processed foods:



are often high in saturated fat, sugars, and salt. Also, avoid sugary drinks and instead drink lots of water.

5. Make cooking and eating fun and meaningful part of your family routine: Cooking and eating together is a great way to create healthy routines, strengthen family bonds, and have fun.

Which Indian food items build the body's natural defense mechanism, 'immunity', to prevent the deadly coronavirus infection?

Some of the most helpful foods in this fight against ill-health are right before us in our home kitchens. Here are some Indian ingredients that have antiviral and anti-inflammatory properties to include in your daily cooking that can help boost your immune system: -

1. Turmeric (Haldi)
2. Black pepper (Kali mirch)
3. Basil leaves (Tulsi)
4. Indian gooseberry (Amla)
5. Cinnamon (Dalchini)
6. Garlic (Lasoon)
7. Ginger (Adrak)
8. Star anise (Chakr phool)

Luckily for us Indians, we are already blessed with strong immunity. Even our food habits are healthy. Freshly cooked homemade food does include an ingredient from above in almost every regional recipe. Further, the staple Indian "dals" are rich in protein and best to consume in the days of the lockdown. From idli sambhar to dal chawal, India, it's time to eat well & stay strong!

## Behind the scenes

Futurologists are reimagining a new wave of technological innovation that will make remote working and virtual office a new norm. But in a labor-intensive industry like the hospitality sector, telework can only be a stopgap arrangement and not a long term solution. At The VITSKamats Group, a congregated workforce is continuing to work relentlessly behind the scenes. With one day dedicated for Kamats and the next for VITS, here's a quick rundown on the work that continues in the lockdown: -

1. Set up a centralized email system to reach all employees mainly to alleviate any fears and share with them more opportunities for living differently.
2. Monitoring on a daily basis the current situation at all outlets.
3. Conference calls every alternate day with senior team members at VITS and Kamats.
4. Letter from Head Office to all stakeholders
  - Franchise owner
  - Hotel partners
  - VITS privilege Members
5. Attending Webinars mainly hosted by the Federation of Hotels and Restaurant Association of India – to get an insight from the industry experts on how to proceed further in/after the lockdown.

6. Backend systems like accounts continue to work mainly to handle salaries.
  7. Uploading and updating customer details in the company database by the sales force. Almost 3000 new customers added to the customer database.
  8. ERP completed. The ERP software system will help to integrate, purchasing inventory, sales, marketing, finance, human resources, and other departments.
  9. Weekly interview rounds carried out online and 60 new employees ready to be finalized in keeping with the expansion program of The VITSKamats Group.
  10. Initiated and completed upgrading a few hotel rooms while preventive maintenance and deep cleaning of rooms continue to ensure readiness when the hotels reopen.
  11. Ongoing online training for Freshdesk – the ticketing software.
- In all of this, let's not forget the continued social work being done by group units. Until then, let each of us stay optimistic and prepare ourselves to get back to work with new resolve and determination to face the post-coronavirus vulnerable world.

## What's Different?

Not everyone has a well-equipped home office space to begin remote work. But everyone at The VITSKamats Group is coping rather well. The COVID-19 crisis is helping to shine a light on both the pleasures and pressures of having the home as your office.

Well, the coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown times have proved different. While many are working from home, they have found time to catch up on other hobbies, interests, activities, or simply coping with household chores. On a lighter vein, let's take an insider look at who is doing what and what they have to say about 'coping in the COVID-19'.

### 1. Vikram Kamat

The 'Indulge When You Can' Man

With conference call schedules, keeping a

close connect with employees and franchise owners, most of my day is spent at official work. I don't blame the occasional cooker whistle letting off steam just in the middle of a webinar....at least I don't have to.

But I thought why not indulge in some things I have missed out on. So, here it is. I signed up for online courses as diverse as artificial learning to learning how to play poker. More free time provided me the luxury to catch up on my reading and even playing with my kids. This is notably the maximum 'masti' time I have spent with my family at home!

### 2. Chandrakant Shetty

The Return of the Culinary Craftsman

Let me tell you my lockdown definitely started with a twist. I had just returned from Thailand and so was on self-quarantine for 14 days till March 21 which I religiously followed. But on March 24th in the middle of the night, I was woken up by the cops to check on me. Well, not just that but even after being assured I was well and had completed the self-

quarantine period, the cops pasted posters in my building as 'containment zone' along with my name on it. The next morning mayhem broke out in the society premises and I had a tough time convincing all members about having completed my self-quarantine time. What a start!

ley). What to say? Once a Hotelier, always a Hotelier. And while I love playing DAD, now waiting for the 60-40 turnaround!

### 3. Parthi Krishnan

The Corporate Housewife

The coronavirus surely turned me into a Corporate Housewife. With my family in Delhi, I was not left with much choice but to stay Home Alone in Mumbai. Beyond office calls, I learned the true meaning of 'work from home'. Don't know for others but zadu pocha and bartan manjna, I realized is also a part of this quintessential 'work from home' concept. Truly no luxury. Ready to head back to the comfort of an office environment.

#### 4. Mohammad Aquib Shaikh (Patel)

Love in the times of Coronavirus

I was all set to get engaged to Nagma on March 29, 2020. With my leave sanctioned I was excited to fly out on 27th to Nagpur for the ceremony. But no regrets..... All Izz Well! On March 29th, I was feeling a bit lonely and disturbed being stranded at home in Mumbai, all by myself. I didn't know what Nagma would be thinking of me. But that's when both families from Nagpur decided to connect with me on video calls. The engagement excitement was not abated!

Then came the even tougher part. Having been left behind at home, I was at a loose end not knowing how to cook meals. That's when our love blossomed. Nagma would give me daily 3 hours of online cooking classes. It went beyond learning to prepare dal and rice. The coronavirus brought us closer.

Once the lockdown opens, wait to hear the wedding bells.

#### 5. Rahul Kotyan

The 40-60 Manager

As a frazzled dad, I realize the regular follow-up work, the webinars, the streamlining of the back-end process, and the regular calls with the operations teams, keep me working from home but it does not actually allow me to concentrate solely on office work. In fact, only 40% of the time I am able to dedicate to my office work, while the balance 60% of my time is being taken up by daily household chores, grocery shopping, a little bit of cooking (which does not involve Maggi noodles), and keeping the kids busy and entertained – from Paw Patrol and Avengers, to Uno and Ludo, I played my part!

In all the mayhem, I did find time to catch up and complete two books which were long due – Dare to Dream: The Life of M S Oberoi (by Bachi Karkaria) and Hotel (by Arthur Hailey). What to say? Once a Hotelier, always a Hotelier. And while I love playing DAD, now waiting for the 60-40 turnaround!

#### 6. Arvind R. Prabhu

The Guardian Angel

I would never have imagined myself guard-

ing my society at night and delivering essential food items and medicines to senior citizens and families with young children. All this and more only because of us being in the containment zone for 20 days. Yes, that's true. Life came to a screeching halt when we turned into the COVID-19 infected 'red zone' during the lockdown.

Being marked as a containment zone, offered me an opportunity to interact closely with the front line soldiers – Mumbai Police, BMC, NGO's, etc. Hearing what our police personnel and the local authorities had to say, I realized how much more difficult their lives were and how they were all risking their lives only to protect us, and to keep us sanitized from the unknown and unseen enemy COVID-19. Sadly, none at all were even provided with the basic necessary Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) kits to protect themselves.

While in the day time I continued to work from home, it was the outdoor hot summer nights that kept me awake and thinking.... thinking of the comforts of our homes and that of our offices, which we often take for granted. The embargo on travel, the difficulty in procuring food and provisions, the grimness of being marked out as a containment area are all lessons that have taught me what otherwise I would never learn. I now truly appreciate the importance of freedom, getting help from support staff at home, mingling with colleagues and friends, and more. Further, I know the tough hygiene regimen set down now, needs to continue forever.

The experience has been vast and varying.

#### 7. Abhishek Tulaskar

The Home Halwai

I have always looked for a silver lining in the grimmest of situations. This time it is no different. The lockdown in the pandemic made me and my wife search for a silver lining in our refrigerator.

And voila, what do we find there? Every ingredient that could make our lives literally sweeter. Thus, was born the Home Halwai in me. With our love for food and a little R&D we made some amazing Malai Pedas, Milk

cakes, Rasmalai, and Gulab jamuns. But the silver lining does not end there...we continue to create Samosas, Dahi Kachoris, and Dhoklas which we miss so much from our favorite Morbi Farsan shop. Further with my wife's love for cakes and pastries, we baked some excellent Vanilla slice and Chocolate cake with ganache.

So every day after 'work from home', it was 'sweets from home'.

Of course, in between working, studying, learning, reading and eating, I managed to catch up on the movies I'd previously missed out over the last decade and a half.

Food for thought..... I am waiting for the lockdown to lift to accomplish more with family, work, friends, and most importantly – FOOD!

## Work from home

